

Private schools expel students who cannot keep up. But only 0.4% of the parents of scholarship students new to school choice report this as a reason they changed schools this fall.

Poor families pick their children's schools on the basis of sports, friends, religion or location, not academic quality. Yet 85% of scholarship recipients from public schools listed "academic quality" as a "very important reason" for their application to the program. Second in importance was the "greater safety" to be found at a choice school, a reason given by 79% of the recipients. "Location" was ranked third. "Religion" was ranked fourth, said to be very important by 37%. Friends were said to be very important by less than 20%.

Private schools engage in "creaming," admitting only the best, easiest-to-educate students. But most applicants found schools willing to accept them, even though a lawsuit filed by the American Federation of Teachers prevented the program from operating until two weeks before school started. When those who were offered but did not accept a scholarship were asked why, inability to secure admission to their desired private school was only the fourth most frequently given reason, mentioned by just 21% of the parents remaining in public schools. Transportation problems, financial considerations and admissions to a desired public school were all mentioned more frequently. (Cleveland has magnet schools that may have opened their doors to some scholarship applicants.)

The data from Cleveland have some limitations, because the program was not set up as a randomized experiment. Yet the comparisons between scholarship recipients new to choice schools and those remaining in public schools are meaningful. That's because, with respect to most of their demographic characteristics—such as mother's education, mother's employment, and family size—the families of scholarship recipients did not differ from those remaining in public schools. In fact, the voucher recipients actually had lower incomes than the group to which they were compared.

Cleveland's success at school choice should not remain an exception to public schools' monopoly on education. If members of Congress care at all about the education of poor children living in the innercity, they should approve the voucher legislation for Washington now before them.

PEOPLE HAVE TROUBLE SEEING DOCTORS BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH MONEY—NOT BECAUSE MEDICARE PAYS DOCTORS TOO LITTLE

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 1997

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, the just-enacted Balanced Budget Act includes a provision that allows doctors not to participate in Medicare for 2 years at a time, but instead to private contract with patients so that they can charge these patients much more than the Medicare fee schedule.

There is now a move underway to strike the 2-year requirement and let doctors do wallet biopsies—decide on a patient-by-patient basis whether they are going to ask patients to give up their Medicare rights and insurance and pay the extra in an individual private contract.

I can think of nothing that will encourage patients to move into HMO's faster, so that they are protected against the fear of this type of doctor extortion. The American Medical Association supports the proposal, but it is an idea that must have been deviously planted in their association by a mole from the HMO lobby—the American Association of Health Plans.

The proposal is pure greed wrapped in the flag of freedom.

Before the Congress is drowned in the rhetoric of this issue, we should note the facts. To the extent that Medicare beneficiaries have trouble seeing doctors, it is almost totally due to the fact that the cost is too much for the beneficiaries—not that Medicare doesn't pay the doctor enough to allow the doctor to see patients.

The latest data from the independent congressional advisory panel—the Physician Payment Assessment Commission—shows that only 4 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries reported having trouble getting health care in the last year. About 11 percent had a medical problem, but failed to see a physician, while 12 percent did not have a physician's office as a usual source of care. Roughly 10 percent of Medicare beneficiaries delayed care due to cost. Considering all four access measures, about 26 percent of Medicare beneficiaries cited experiencing at least one of these problems.

PhysPRC reports that from their surveys of those who failed to see a physician for their serious medical problem, 43 cited cost as the reason. About 8 percent of those who failed to see a physician could not get an appointment or find an available physician. For another 8 percent, transportation was the problem, 13 percent felt there was nothing a doctor could do, and 11 percent were afraid of finding out what was wrong.

In another words, Congress is preparing to let doctors charge patients infinitely higher fees because less than 1 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries had trouble finding a doctor—perhaps they lived in a rural area, etc. Yet over 5 percent of Medicare's nearly 40 million beneficiaries could not get to a doctor because they didn't have enough money—and Congress is silent.

Mr. Speaker, a humane Congress, a compassionate Congress, a logical, rational Congress would put five times as much effort into addressing the problem of doctors costing too much as it would in addressing what may be a 1-percent problem of a few doctors wanting to get paid more.

Where are our priorities, Mr. Speaker? A vote to let doctors, the richest 1-percent income group in our Nation, charge the sky's the limit, while ignoring the needs nearly 2 million seniors who find doctors already too expensive is a shameful vote.

TRIBUTE TO HOLY FAMILY PARISH

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 23, 1997

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Holy Family Parish for its 100

years of providing spiritual guidance, counseling, and education to the south Bronx community.

On September 20, the parish celebrated its 100th anniversary in my south Bronx congressional district. On this joyful occasion, Archbishop John Cardinal O'Connor officiated at a Thanksgiving Mass. Parishioners joined together in prayer to thank the Lord for the parish's 100 years of fruitful service.

Holy Family Parish has a long and inspiring history of perseverance and commitment to making a difference in the south Bronx. Through the years, the church has served a vibrant community of people from many ethnic backgrounds.

In the late 1890's, Rev. Joseph S. Mechler saw the need to serve an emerging community in the Bronx. In the fall of 1897, the cornerstone for the new church was laid, and by Christmas of that same year the congregation celebrated their first mass in the new building.

Archbishop Michael Corrigan dedicated the church in 1898. He lived in the basement of the parish and served his community until his final years.

Since 1903, eight pastors have faithfully served the parish. Among them was Father Urban Nageleisen, who served the church for 37 years, until his death in 1949. He was a friend and spiritual adviser to the growing German immigrant community of the time. Under his pastorate, the church also established a school for children with the help of the Sisters of St. Agnes.

During the difficult years of the Depression, the church continued serving the faithful and the congregation actually grew in numbers.

With the passing away of Father Nageleisen, Father John Mechler assumed the leadership of the church. During those years, the church and the convent that housed the Sisters of St. Agnes were both very deteriorated. Pastor Mechler proposed and raised the funding to build a new convent and a new church in the south Bronx. The new parish kept the original cornerstone.

Throughout its history, the Holy Family Parish has been responsive to the changing needs of its community. In 1981, the parish celebrated their first mass in Spanish in recognition of the growing Hispanic community, which had become an integral part of the church. In addition, the lower part of the church has been transformed into a meeting place for senior citizens, where hot lunches, recreational activities, and medical services are provided.

Today, Father James D. Flanagan leads the church. After 100 years, the church continues to be a catalyst of positive change in our community. Over 700 children are currently enrolled in the school, which educates students from kindergarten to eighth grade. In addition, hundreds of members of the community have grown in their faith.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Holy Family Parish for its 100 years of history at the service of the south Bronx community.